

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Judges And Ruth: Personal Blessing Amid Group Apostasy

Part II: History Of The Era Of The Judges

B. The Record Of Specific Judges, Judges 3:7-16:31

5. Gideon's Judgeship: God's Developing A Prodigal Into An Effective Leader, Judges 6:1-8:21

a. God's Call To Cause Gideon To Revere Him And To Obey His Word

(Judges 6:1-35)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Jesus' parable in Luke 15:11-32 about the prodigal son can be widely applied today:

(1) Bret Stephens' "Global View" column in The Wall Street Journal, October 20, 2015, p. A11, ran the editorial, "In Defense of Christendom" that claimed: "Europe is dying because it has become morally incompetent . . . Europeans no longer believe in . . . the things from which their beliefs spring," among which is "Christianity."

(2) Prodigals exist within Christendom itself: Guy Consolmagno, an astronomer at the Vatican Observatory, claims "that the literal interpretation of the Genesis creation account is 'almost blasphemous theology.'"

(christiannews.net, "Vatican Astronomer Calls Young Earth Creation Beliefs 'Almost Blasphemous,'" 10/20/2014)

(3) Prodigals also exist in evangelical circles: when my Dad in California began to teach a copy of our lesson on "Discipling Our Prodigals Using The Missionary Approach," he wondered about the response as so many in his class had prodigal children or grandchildren. However, the class warmly responded as it was eager for such insight.

Need: *So, we ask, "With the rise of many prodigal individuals or groups of people, how should we respond?!"*

- I. **After Deborah's era, Israel again turned to idols, but this time the nation stayed prodigal, Judges 6:1-10:**
 - A. Due to Israel's return to idolatry, God let the Midianites overpower Israel so that His people hid in the dens in the mountains, in caves and in the strongholds of the countryside, Judges 6:1b-2.
 - B. When Israel would plant her crops, the Midianites, Amalekites and people of the East would swarm into the land like locusts, taking the harvest and leaving neither crops nor livestock for Israel, Judges 6:3-6a NIV.
 - C. God's people thus cried out unto the Lord for deliverance, and He sent a prophet to explain the spiritual reason behind their current oppression so that Israel might repent so that God might deliver her, Judges 6:6b-8a. This prophet mentioned God's record of having rescued Israel from past oppression with the provision that Israel revere Him versus fearing pagan gods, but that Israel had disobeyed God, turning to idols, Jud 6:8b-10.
 - D. Yet, though crying to God for deliverance, Israel ignored the prophet on forsaking false gods, staying prodigal.
- II. **Thus, God graciously worked directly but shockingly with Gideon, one of Israel's prodigal men, to get him to heed all His prophet's words that God might use him to deliver Israel from Midian, Jud. 6:11-32:**
 - A. When the Angel of the Lord, the Preincarnate Christ (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Judges 6:11), met Gideon while he was threshing wheat, laboring hard to beat out stalks by hand in a winepress to hide it from the Midianites versus driving an ox-pulled sledge over them on a threshing floor (B. K. C., O. T., p. 391-392), the Angel came and restfully sat under a nearby oak, signaling the rest Gideon could have enjoyed versus his hard work caused by unbelief and disobedience, and He called Gideon to defeat the Midianites, Judges 6:11-12.
 - B. However, Gideon replied that the God of the Exodus had since then failed to help Israel, Judges 6:11-13. He thus revealed that he as a prodigal had neglected to heed part of the prophet's message, Judges 6:13, 8b-10:
 1. Gideon reacted to the Lord's call that he lead Israel to victory by complaining that God had failed to keep helping Israel as his forefathers testified He had done in Israel's past deliverance from Egypt, Judges 6:13.
 2. Such a view of God erred as it clearly neglected the prophet's message against pagan idols, Judges 6:10.
 3. Indeed, in the later context, we learn that Gideon's father had an altar to the pagan god Baal and his consort Asherah, what Gideon would have tolerated in violation of God's message by the prophet, Judges 6:25b.
 - C. Yet, Israel had called unto God for help (Judges 6:6), so He **graciously** but **shockingly** began to disciple a **prodigal** Gideon to heed the **full** message of His prophet so as to use Gideon to defeat Midian, Judges 6:14-32:
 1. The Lord **FIRST** shocked Gideon into **revering** Him that Gideon might **obey** His message, Jud. 6:14-24:
 - a. God again encouraged Gideon to lead Israel, promising that He would give Gideon success, Judges 6:14.
 - b. Gideon objected, claiming that his clan was the least influential in his tribe of Manasseh, and that he was the least son in his father's household, leaving him humanly inadequate to lead Israel in war, Judges 6:15.
 - c. Again, the Lord directed Gideon to shift his attention away from himself to trust in the Lord to lead Israel (Judges 6:16), so Gideon asked for a sign that it was really the Lord Who was giving him this

encouragement, Judges 6:17: Gideon asked the Lord to remain there while he went to prepare a gift to offer to Him, and the Lord agreed, Judges 6:18. The word used for gift, *minhah*, referred either a tribute offered to a king or a superior or to a freewill offering to a deity, Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 392.

- d. When Gideon returned, the Angel had Gideon put the food on a nearby rock and pour out its broth over the food, *Ibid.* The Angel then touched the food with the tip of His staff, causing fire to flare up from the rock and consume the food as a fellowship offering to the Lord, and then He vanished, *Jud. 6:19-21 NIV.*
- e. This event terrified Gideon, for to him it meant that he had seen God and would die: only in Leviticus 9:24 at Mount Sinai had God before miraculously lit a sacrifice, causing all Israel to fall on their faces, and at that place, no one could see God and live (*Ex. 19:21*), so Gideon feared he would die, *Judges 6:22.*
- f. Actually, the Preincarnate Christ was *graciously* communicating to Gideon that He as the God of Israel's Exodus of Whom Gideon had earlier referred had helped Israel was still available to help him opposite Gideon's criticism of the Lord's failure to help Israel now in *Judges 6:13!* Christ had come as the Angel of the Lord in fulfillment of God's Exodus 23:20-23 promise at Mount Sinai to send His Angel ahead of Israel to give her victory over her Gentile foes like Midian in the Promised Land were they to heed Him!
- g. The Lord thus explained to Gideon that he would not die, saying to him, "Peace be to you," *Judges 6:23*, so in great relief, Gideon built an altar unto the Lord, calling it, "The Lord is Peace," *Judges 6:24.*
2. However, having shocked Gideon into respecting Him, God **THEN** led Gideon to do what His prophetic messenger had initially directed Israel and Gideon to do -- to begin to put away their idols, *Judges 6:25-32.* God wanted Gideon to heed His messenger in his personal life before giving Gideon victory over Midian:
 - a. The evening of the very day that God had shocked Gideon into greatly revering Him, He told Gideon to do what God's prophet had implied that Israel do but that Israel had not done -- to destroy his father's altar to Baal and offer a bull on it using the wood from the nearby idolatrous Asherah pole, *Jud. 6:25-26 NIV.*
 - b. Fearing human reprisal, but respecting God more, Gideon heeded God's command under cover of night, but when the neighbors in the morning saw what he had done, they wanted him executed, *Judges 6:27-30.*
 - c. Gideon's father replied that if Baal was a real god, he could avenge himself by slaying Gideon, so Gideon's name became Jerubbaal, meaning "let Baal contend," *Ibid., Ryrie, ftn. to Judges 6:32.*
 - d. However, Baal did nothing to Gideon, so he became increasingly respected for his stand!
- D. When the Midianites then made their annual trip into Israel to take spoil, pitching their tents in the valley of Jezreel (*Jud. 6:33*), near where Barak had fought Sisera, God's Spirit came on the now God-fearing, Biblically obedient Gideon, and he blew a trumpet to summon Israel's men to fight the Midianites, *Judges 6:34-35.*

Lesson: *When Israel cried to the Lord for deliverance but neglected to heed His prophetic messenger as a prodigal nation, God graciously got directly involved with Gideon, one of Israel's prodigal men, to shock him into revering the Lord so that Gideon might obey His Word from God's prophet that the Lord might use Gideon to deliver Israel.*

Application: *(1) May we believe in Christ to obtain eternal life, John 3:16. (2) If God has sent us as a messenger to another party but the hearer(s) as a prodigal(s) does not heed our word, we must entrust the prodigal(s) to the Lord for Him directly to disciple him (them). (3) If we are the prodigal, may we revere God and heed His Word that He initially sends us versus seeing God have to work directly and SHOCKINGLY to get us to obey Him!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

In 1725, a boy named John was born in London, England to a devout Christian mother, and she "taught" him "to pray and filled his mind with the Scriptures." ("God Rescues a Rebel," Hymns of Faith & Inspiration, 1990, p. 80). However, she died just before John's seventh birthday, and since his father was "an often-absent sea captain," John was sent to live with distant relatives who ridiculed his childhood faith, *Ibid.*

John eventually abandoned his mother's teaching and went to sea, ending up in the African slave trade where he lived a life of great sin. Then, while on a slave ship that was nearing Scotland, "severe winds and rains battered" the boat, so a John terrified put his faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, *Ibid., p. 81.*

John Newton became a pastor and testified of his conversion, writing the hymn "Amazing Grace," *Ibid.* He also influenced William Wilberforce, a member of the British parliament, to lead the nation to abolish slavery in the Act of 1807 (A. Skevington Wood, The Inextinguishable Blaze, 1968, p. 208, 239, 245).

A prodigal son returned to the Lord by God's gracious but shocking disciplining to end up productive for Christ.

(1) May we trust in Christ to be saved. (2) If we oversee a hardened prodigal, may we commit him to God for Him to disciple. (3) If we are the prodigal, may we heed God before He takes shocking action with us!